

**Criteria and Procedures
for
The Palmetto Gold and Silver Award
Program**

The Division of Accountability

South Carolina Education Oversight Committee

March 2001

Statutory Authority

§59-18-1100. The State Board of Education, working with the division and the Department of Education, must establish the Palmetto Gold and Silver Awards Program to recognize and reward schools for academic achievement. Awards will be established for schools attaining high levels of absolute performance and for schools attaining high rates of improvement. The award program must be based upon improved performance on longitudinally matched student data and may include such additional criteria as:

- (1) student attendance;
- (2) teacher attendance;
- (3) student dropout rates; and
- (4) any other factors promoting or maintaining high levels of achievement and performance.

Schools shall be rewarded according to specific criteria established by the division. In defining eligibility for a reward for high levels of performance, student performance should exceed expected levels of improvement. The State Board of Education shall promulgate regulations to ensure districts of the State utilize these funds to improve or maintain exceptional performance according to their schools' plans established in Section 59-139-10. Funds may be utilized for professional development support.

Special schools for the academically talented are not eligible to receive an award pursuant to the provision of this section unless they have demonstrated improvement and high absolute achievement for three years immediately preceding.

Overview

The Palmetto Gold and Silver Awards Program was established by the Education Accountability Act of 1998. As an important part of the education accountability system in South Carolina, the Awards program is designed to recognize and reward “schools for attaining high levels of absolute performance and schools for attaining high rates of improvement.”

The Division of Accountability is responsible for developing criteria for the Palmetto Gold and Silver Awards Program. As with other efforts, an advisory group of South Carolina educators was formed to recommend criteria and statistical procedures. The criteria and procedures utilized for selecting schools to receive the Gold & Silver Award are based on the *Criteria for School and District Ratings* as approved by The South Carolina Education Oversight Committee on December 6, 2000.

The criteria and procedures established for the Palmetto Gold & Silver Awards Program reflect a fundamental belief that all schools, regardless of their socioeconomic status and geographic location, can improve toward high academic standards and excellence and that all children can learn at high levels. Schools will be recognized not only for high levels of student academic achievement, but also for efforts that result in exemplary improvement.

In developing the criteria and procedures, the following essential elements were taken into consideration: fairness and equity, raising the performance levels of historically underachieving groups, and inclusiveness of as many schools as possible.

Criteria and Procedures

Eligibility

All schools and career and technology centers with student learning achievement outcome data will be eligible for participation in the Palmetto Gold and Silver Awards Program. No application is required.

There are no additional requirements for percent of student tested and the inclusion of special education students since the methodology for calculating the absolute and improvement ratings addresses these issues.

According to the Education Accountability Act of 1998 Section §59-18-1100, 'special schools for the academically talented are not eligible to receive an award pursuant to the provision of this section unless they have demonstrated improvement and high absolute achievement for three years immediately preceding.'

Performance of Subgroups of Students and Gap Reduction

The criteria address improvement of performance for historically underachieving subgroups. There are three student subgroups to be considered:

- (1) minority students,
- (2) free/reduced price meal students, and
- (3) students with non-speech disabilities.

Minority students will be defined as African-American, Hispanic, or Native American students. These students will be combined for purposes of analysis. There must be 30 students in each subgroup in a school for the group to be considered. The method for considering the performance of subgroup improvement defined in the *Criteria for School and District Ratings* will be used as gap reduction criteria. If the improvement index for each historically underachieving subgroup in the school exceeds the State two-year weighted improvement index by at least one standard deviation, the school's improvement rating will be increased by one level.

Criteria for Selecting Schools for Awards

Three procedures will be utilized to select schools that meet the criteria for attaining high levels of absolute performance and high rates of improvement. Schools that are selected through any of the three procedures will be recognized through the Palmetto Gold and Silver Awards Program.

The Primary Selection Procedure:

Based on the Absolute Performance and Improvement Ratings

The procedure is a combination of the absolute performance and improvement ratings as prescribed in the *Criteria for School and District Ratings*. The improvement rating used for selection of award recipient schools includes adjustment for gap reduction.

To qualify for a Gold or Silver award, a school's absolute performance rating must be above unsatisfactory. Schools will receive a Gold or a Silver award when one of the following conditions occurs:

- ◆ Schools with an excellent rating in absolute performance will receive Gold award for high level of academic performance as long as their improvement rating is equal to or above average.
- ◆ Schools with an excellent rating in improvement will receive a Gold award for high levels of improvement as long as their absolute performance rating is above unsatisfactory.
- ◆ Schools with a good rating in improvement will receive a Silver award for good improvement results as long as their absolute rating is above unsatisfactory.

The following figure shows the selection procedure proposed:

| Absolute Performance Rating | Improvement Rating | Award Designation |
|-----------------------------|--------------------|-------------------|
| Excellent | Excellent | Gold |
| Excellent | Good | Gold |
| Excellent | Average | Gold |
| Good | Excellent | Gold |
| Good | Good | Silver |
| Average | Excellent | Gold |
| Average | Good | Silver |
| Below Average | Excellent | Gold |
| Below Average | Good | Silver |

Second Selection Procedure:

Based on High Improvement Ranking by School Type

In order to insure that each of the three school types (elementary, middle, and secondary) are approximately evenly recognized through the Palmetto Gold and Silver Awards Program, the following three steps will be performed each year.

- ◆ Rank order the improvement index for each school by school type,
- ◆ select the schools with an improvement index percentile rank of 85th or higher, provided the improvement index is at least 0.15,
- ◆ exclude schools that have an unsatisfactory rating for absolute performance.

A school would be selected to receive a Silver award if its percentile rank for its improvement index is 85th or higher among the schools with the same type housing similar grades and its absolute rating is above unsatisfactory.

**Third Selection Procedure:
Based on Steady Growth over Three or More Consecutive Years**

A school may qualify for a Silver award if the school's absolute performance rating is above unsatisfactory for the most recent year, and

- ◆ its improvement index is 0.20 or greater for two consecutive years, or
- ◆ its improvement index is 0.15 or greater for three consecutive years.

Schools Housing Grades K-2

Schools housing grades K-2 will not qualify for a Palmetto Gold and Silver Award for lack of student learning achievement outcome data.

Wil Lou Gray Special School

The school may qualify for an award on its absolute performance and improvement ratings as defined in *Criteria for School and District Ratings*. However, The Advisory Group recommends that the committee reconvene to examine the criteria and data available again after two years.

Career and Technology Centers

Career and technology centers may qualify for a Gold or Silver award based on three of the criteria developed for generating the center report cards. These three criteria are:

- 1). mastering for competencies or certification requirements,
- 2). graduation rate, and
- 3). placement rate.

As described in the *Criteria for School and District Ratings*, the mastery criterion will be weighted at twice the value of the other criteria. The proportion of students enrolling is not considered as part of the criteria.

Special Schools for the Academically Talented

According to the Education Accountability Act of 1998 Section §59-18-1100, 'special schools for the academically talented are not eligible to receive an award pursuant to the provision of this section unless they have demonstrated improvement and high absolute achievement for three years immediately preceding.'

Definition of special schools for academically talented (Magnet schools)

A special school for the academically talented is a district-operated school that has at least 50 percent of its enrollment of students based upon predicted or realized high achievement from across multiple school attendance zones.

Criteria for Awards for Special schools for Academically Talented

Special schools for academically talented will qualify to receive a gold award when one of the following conditions occurs:

- ◆ Schools with an excellent rating in absolute performance for three consecutive years starting in the school year 1999-2000 will receive a Gold award for attaining high levels of academic performance as long as their improvement rating is equal to or above average for the most recent year.
- ◆ Schools with an excellent rating in absolute performance for three consecutive years and an absolute performance index value of 4.5 for the most recent year will receive a Gold award for attaining high levels of achievement.

Awarding Criteria for High Schools

(To be completed when the data for high school are available.)

Allocation of Funds and Non-Achievement Criteria

School financial awards shall be calculated on a per pupil basis in accordance with the particular criteria met. A school qualifying for a financial award will receive 80% of the per pupil allocation, plus up to an additional 20% based on the following criteria:

- a. student attendance, criterion set at 97%,
- b. teacher attendance, criterion set at 97%,
- c. dropout rate, grades 7-8, criterion set at 0 (no drop outs),
- d. dropout rate, grades 9-12, criterion set at 2.5%.

Schools qualifying for a silver award will receive two-thirds the per pupil allocation of schools receiving a gold award.

Acknowledgement

Deep appreciation goes to Dr. JoAnne Anderson, Executive Director of Education Oversight Committee, for her guidance in policy issues during the process of developing the criteria for the program.

Special thanks are also extended to the following educators who served on the Advisory Group:

Dr. Douglas Alexander,
Director of Research and Evaluation
Richland One School District

Dr. Tina Marshall Bradley
Benedict College

Dr. Ling Gao
Director of Evaluation
Education Oversight Committee

Mr. Jeff Radnor
Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum
and Instruction
Anderson School District Four

Dr. Janelle Rivers
Coordinator of Testing and Evaluation
Lexington One School District

Dr. John Segars
Director of Testing and Information
Technology
Darlington County School District

Mrs. Missy Wall-Mitchell
Director of Planning and Evaluation
Georgetown County School District

Dr. John Suber
Education Associate
Office of School Quality
The State Department of Education

Mr. Pin Pin Tee
Consultant, Technical Support
Charleston School District